

CDC Health-e-Cards

Purpose

This document is designed to assist Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) employees and contractors in the development of eCards, or electronic greeting cards.

Background

eCards are communication tools used to encourage healthy behavior by communicating programs, products, and information to individuals. eCards are popular among consumers. The Greeting Card Association estimates that 500 Million eCards are sent annually. To visit the Center for Disease Control and Prevention's (CDC) Health-e-Card site, please go to:

www.cdc.gov/ecards.

eCards can be an effective and inexpensive way to reach individuals with personalized and targeted health information. CDC's Health-e-Cards provide the opportunity for individuals to send a personal message as well as health messages to friends and family. Individuals can then forward the eCard that they received onto additional family and friends, allowing eCards to spread virally.

Communications Strategy

eCards and other social media tools are intended to be part of a larger integrated health communications program or project developed under the leadership of the Associate Director of Communication Science (ADCS) in the Health Communication Science Office (HCSO) of CDC's National Centers. HCSOs are responsible for the coordination and guidance of health marketing and communication activities of their respective centers which includes communications science clearance, strategic planning and research and evaluation.

Clearance

All eCards must be cleared through the clearance channels determined by your HCSO.

Consultation

The Electronic Media Branch (EMB) is able to provide assistance and consultation on the planning and development of social media tools. Please refer to Process section on page 5 of this document for additional information or you can contact socialmedia@cdc.gov.

Recommendations

Before starting to develop an eCard, please consider the following:

1. **Clearly Define the Objectives:** Do you want to highlight content, spark action, or encourage awareness of an issue? Clearly defined objectives for an eCard project can help in creating text for the cover and inside of the card as well as choosing images. Clearly defined objectives will also help you determine the best Web page to link to. For example, many CDC.gov home page features (health & safety features and/or data & stats features) link to an eCard. The link helps drive traffic to the feature page and to deeper CDC content pages.
2. **Know Your Target Audience(s):** As with any communications activity, it is important to define your intended target audience(s) in order to develop and communicate messages and graphics that resonate with your audience and prompt them to take action. There are two audiences to consider when developing eCards—the sender and the recipient. All cards should contain messaging and images considered appropriate for sending and receiving by friends, family members, or colleagues.
 - For the most part, Health-e-Cards will target members of the general public, although there may be some instances when healthcare providers, public health professionals, or other audiences are targeted.
 - Greeting cards are meant to be sent to a wide range of people. For example, the pregnancy eCard (see example on page 7), was created using an image that can be sent to a variety of pregnant women. The Division of Communication Services (DCS) can provide images and other creative expertise for creating eCards.
3. **Create eCards with a longer “Shelf Life”**
 - It is best to create evergreen eCards. For example, instead of creating an eCard for National Influenza Vaccination Week, we recommend creating one for flu prevention which can be sent from early November through February. Creating eCards for a one or two day event is not recommended, unless it is being utilized for federally recognized holidays or programs can invest in significant promotion.
 - All cards created for holidays, observation days and seasonal events should be taken down and archived from the eCard Web page as soon as the event is over. Likewise, all evergreen cards must be reviewed annually for content accuracy, per HHS content standards.
4. **Animation:** can enhance your eCard, but should be thoughtful:
 - Any animation used should be purposeful, thoughtful and complement the intended message.
 - Animation options include the automatic start or the selection of the play button by the user.
 - DCS can provide expertise with animation.
 - Use of standard buttons and icons is required.
 - All animation needs to be properly described in the 508 captions.
 - eCard animation should be less than 1-minute in length (data shows drop off after about 45 seconds).

5. **Audio:** Another useful enhancement to an eCard, but consider these recommendations:
 - Any music selected should be purposeful, thoughtful and compliment the intended message.
 - All music selected must be copyright free. Contact DCS for additional guidance and to review selection from their catalog.
 - Audio should not automatically be activated when the card is opened. The user should have the option to turn on the audio by selecting the icon displayed on the card. DCS has a standard icon for use in audio cards.
 - All audio with words must be captioned.
 - All audio needs to be properly described in the 508 captions.
 - Use of standard buttons and icons is required.
 - All eCard audio should be shorter than 1-minute.

6. **Design and Usability:** Certain design aspects may be important to include especially if the eCard is part of a series or a component of a larger program that has a designated graphic identity. To follow HHS and CDC guidelines for good design and usability, the following should be considered:
 - Images and content on both the front and inside of the card should be attractive, engaging, modern and easy to read.
 - The design on the front of the card should encourage the viewer to open the card, read the inside and click on the link to additional content.
 - For optimal viewing, the inside of the card should contain a light background with dark text and few or no images.
 - All links should be formatted to display as live links (i.e. underlined and in color).
 - For additional information, please see:
http://intranet.cdc.gov/cdcweb/regs_bestpractices/guidance_standards.htm
(Not accessible outside the CDC network).

7. **Content:** The text within an eCard should be short, simple, and easy to read.
 - A maximum of three lines of text (approximately 125 characters) on the inside of the eCard is recommended. Suggested fonts include 24 point Arial or equivalent in Georgia, Helvetica, Trebuchet or Verdana. Character limit will vary by font type. The eCard template (see example) is based on the standard Arial font, 24 point.
 - All text should be positive and encourage the viewer to take action or visit the CDC Web site for more information.

8. **Links:** All eCards should have a URL on the inside of the card to direct the user to the CDC.gov Web site for more information.
 - The eCard system only allows for two links inside the card. One should be a call to action. The other can be used to direct traffic to CDC.gov or a partner Web site such as flu.gov.
 - Links to specific, targeted content and short, concise textual name for the link (one line) are recommended. Once links are determined, develop as short text description that is a call to action for the hyperlinked text. For example: Learn more about Healthy Pregnancy.

- The standard font and size for the URL is Arial, 18 point. The URL should not exceed 60 characters of text in 18 point Arial font or equivalent in Georgia, Helvetica, Trebuchet or Verdana. The character limit will vary by font type.
9. **Branding:** All eCards will be branded with the CDC.gov, CDC and HHS logos.
 - This branding should be on the inside of the card (see example on page 8), and is already included in the eCard template that DCS uses to create the cards.
 - Co-branding and the use of additional logos may also be incorporated. Please refer to the CDC Brand Identity standards for additional information.
<http://brandidentitystandards.cdc.gov/>
 10. **Translation:** eCards can be translated into other languages when links to appropriate CDC.gov content in that language are available. Additional time will be added to the production schedule to translate cleared cards. For additional information, please refer to <http://intranet.cdc.gov/nchm/dhcm/MLS/> (This site is only available to internal CDC staff and contractors.)
 11. **Promotion:** Promoting Health-e-Cards is strongly recommended, programs have promoted eCards in the following ways:
 - Include the eCard on your CDC homepage and secondary features.
 - Include a thumbnail and link on high-profile topic-specific pages.
 - Include a thumbnail and link in campaign materials.
 - Send content-specific GovDelivery email updates.
 - Send eCards or emails to partners and grantees.
 - Post a promotional message on the CDC eHealth and other Twitter accounts. Contact socialmedia@cdc.gov for additional assistance.
 12. **Evaluation:** Social media activities should be evaluated and may include reviewing metrics, identifying lessons learned, and determining whether the effort successfully met project goals. The Electronic Media Branch (EMB) is able to provide the number of times each eCard has been sent and viewed. Please contact socialmedia@cdc.gov for eCard metrics. Metrics can be captured via Omniture SiteCatalyst to determine the number of click-throughs from an eCard to CDC.gov.

Process - How to create a CDC Health-e-Card

1. Develop and clear concept and messaging for front and inside of eCard through the pre-determined HCSO channels, keeping in mind the constraints and “best practices” described in this document.
2. Work with the Division of Communication Services (DCS) to:
 - a. Complete a Create-It service request form - http://intra-apps.cdc.gov/createit/createit2/request_job_start.asp?departmentId=1, Select “Health-e-Cards from the left navigation.
 - b. Develop or identify image for the eCard cover. To view a selection of stock photography images available, go to the http://intra-apps.cdc.gov/createit/createit2/request_job_start.asp?departmentId=1. Select “stock photography” from the left navigation.
 - c. Work with DCS to incorporate animation or audio for your eCard, if appropriate and desired. (See “Best Practices” above for more information about animation and audio.
3. Complete the CDC Health-e-Card Checklist on page 8.
4. Clear eCard files, title, category or categories, audience(s), and 508 text through clearance channels developed by your HCSO.
5. Provide cleared eCard to the graphic designer in DCS for posting to the CDC Web site. eCards can be posted to the internet within 48-hours of final clearance.
6. Keep a version of the cleared files for your records. If you need to make changes or update the files, having the files will help to expedite the process.

Electronic Media Consultation

The Electronic Media Branch is able to provide assistance and consultation on the planning and development of social media tools. Please contact socialmedia@cdc.gov.

Appendix

Technical and Other Requirements

1. File Type and Size Requirements

- Standard eCard size - 470 pixels wide by 264 pixels high.
- Screen resolution – 72 dpi.
- The images need to be in JPG format and the eCard file needs to be in Flash (.swf).
- Recommended font and text size – inside of the eCard Arial, 24 point, the link text is Arial, 18 point. The text size should not exceed 125 characters (Arial 24-point) for the inside of the eCard and 60 characters of text (Arial 18-point) or equivalent in Georgia, Helvetica, Trebuchet or Verdana. The character limit will vary by font type.
- eCards linked from a CDC.gov feature page should include a thumbnail in JPG format of the eCard front at 150 pixels x 86 pixels x 72 dpi.

2. Labeling

All CDC eCards should be referred to as CDC Health-e-Cards on the Internet. In talking about eCards in general, the standardized term is 'eCards' or 'eCard'.

3. Categories/Topics/Audiences

On the CDC.gov eCard site, all eCards are organized topically. Go to www.cdc.gov/eCards and determine the categories to place the cards into and the audience designation(s) for each eCard. To maximize exposure, it is recommended that the eCard be listed in more than one category, if applicable. For example, a card focusing on women's heart disease prevention could be in both the Healthy Living/Women's Health and Disease and Conditions/Heart Health categories.

4. Title

All cards need a unique title no greater than 20 characters, including spaces. The title should grab the attention of your audience and accurately describe the content of the card. If multiple eCards are created for the same topic, each card will need a unique 20-character title. Do not use numbers to create a new title. For example, names like flu1, flu2 and flu3 are not as descriptive as Don't Wait Vaccinate, Cover Your Cough and Get Vaccinated.

5. Section 508 Compliance and Captions

All CDC Health-e-Cards must be Section 508-compliant in order to make electronic information accessible to persons with disabilities. A caption must be written describing all images and all of the text on both the front and the inside of the card. If possible, the captions should not be longer than 500 characters, including spaces (see example on next page). For additional information about Section 508, please see: <http://intranet.cdc.gov/cdcweb/usability/508/> (not accessible outside the CDC network.)

6. Other Considerations

To prevent possible security vulnerabilities that may be introduced using Flash (a product used to create animations), all eCards are subject to vulnerability scanning and code review before being deployed into production.

Example of an eCard

Title of eCard (20 Characters):
Pregnancy – Congrats

CDC Health-e-Card Example (cover):



CDC Health-e-Card Example (inside):



Section 508 Compliant Text (500 Characters):

Front: Graphic of baby clothes and a blanket. Text: Congratulations on your Pregnancy! Inside: You are going to be a wonderful mother! Staying healthy during your pregnancy gives your baby a healthy start in life! Information on Healthy Pregnancy: http://www.cdc.gov/ncbddd/pregnancy_gateway/now.htm

